

spirit of justice, and, even in an age which had seen the law outraged for personal ends at the mere nod of the despot, there was a storm of protest against Whitgift's inquisition. Even Lord Burghley, who had to tread so warily in the presence of his imperious mistress, waxed indignant and outspoken. "But now, my good lord," wrote he to Whitgift, "by chance I am come to sight of an instrument of twenty-four articles of great length and curiosity, formed in a Romish style, to examine all manner of ministers in this time without distinction of persons . . . which I have read, and find so curiously penned, so full of branches and circumstances, as I think the Inquisition of Spain use not so many questions to comprehend and entrap their preys. I know your canonists can defend these with all their perticels, but surely . . . this judicial and canonical sifting of poor ministers is not to edify and reform. And in chancy I think they ought not to answer to all these nice points, except they were very notorious offenders in papistry and heresy. . . . According to my simple judgment, this kind of proceeding is too much savouring of the Romish inquisition, and is rather a device to seek for offenders than to reform any."

Whitgift retorted that his tactics were "more tolerable" than the procedure of the Court of Star Chamber. It was a poor answer for a Christian ecclesiastic to make, and the disgraceful chapter which the arbitrary severities of the High Commission added to the history of the maladministration of justice in England amply bears out the Lord Treasurer's asperities. For refusing the oath *ex officio*, many recusants were imprisoned for longer or shorter periods. These men might magnify compliance in small points of discipline into hideous sins, but the *ex officio* oath was assuredly no trifle. Moreover, their persecutors were equally prone to stickle for trifles, and in exacting this oath on pain of imprisonment they not only inflicted a vast amount of suffering, but outraged the principles of justice for the sake of such a transcendent formality as the sign of the cross in baptism. They charged men with sedition who objected to the domineering jurisdiction of despots like Aylmer, bishop of London, himself a renegade Puritan, and consequently one of the bitterest of their oppressors. They were vindictive as well as thorough, and when